

## **I. Project Title and Project Propose Statement**

### **Title of Project: *Hispanic Youth: The Tipping Point for Environmental Justice in a San Antonio Barrio Using Community-Based Art***

The goal of the project is for San Anto Cultural Arts (SACA) to collaborate with a historically underrepresented community in their development of climate resiliency through improved understanding and actions to address the harm to health and welfare from exposure of the multiple risks from inappropriate **solid waste disposal**. Challenges exist in the complexity of moving a community from a culture of consumption into a culture of sustainability. However, what is known is that youth have always been among the main agents for significant local and global cultural changes, and it is unlikely that the needed change can be created without them (UN, 2013). Thus, this project will mentor and train at-risk Hispanic youth as the threshold level or “tipping points” (Gladwell, 2000) by which their individual development of environmental justice community-based art projects will have community-level consequences. At-risk Hispanic youth will receive education and training on the **Solid Waste Disposal Act** as well as leadership development and civic engagement skills enabling them to become the ambassadors in a community engagement process of informing and educating the community in the health and welfare of solid waste disposal issues. In addition, *they will facilitate building the community’s capacity relative to environmental justice issues* by actively engaging the community in the shared activity of the decision-making process of the design and implementation of community-based art projects and activities that improve environmental health conditions for themselves, their families and neighbors. Strategies to meet the project’s goals include educating and training the youth ambassadors relative to the health and welfare effects of exposure to materials present in solid waste and methods to eliminate such effects. In addition, this training will include strategies for leadership development and civic engagement. Armed with this knowledge and guided and mentored by SACA staff and artists, the youth will collaborate with community residents through a series of community meetings in the decision and creation of community-based art projects and activities, to include a mural, creative writing, and screen printing, that will provide culturally relevant messages to the community about the health and welfare effects of solid waste exposure. The project will take place in **San Antonio, TX, zip code 78207**, typically referred to as the “Westside.” This community is a historically low-income, ignored and underdeveloped community that has a predominantly Hispanic population.

## **II. Environmental, Public Health and Community Climate Resiliency Information about Affected Community**

The Westside of San Antonio represents a significant part of the city’s identity as a center for Hispanic culture. Although the area prospered in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the construction of interstate highways in the 1960s physically cut off the Westside from downtown San Antonio and lead to its decline (OHP, 2014). Although San Antonio is growing, the majority has occurred in readily growing greenfield areas and in the immediate downtown area, this has been at the expense of inner city areas, like the Westside, which, while rich in cultural history, has been plagued by blight and high environmental disparities (COSA, 2012). For instance, the city of San Antonio has identified 168 brownfield sites located on the Westside (COSA, 2012).

In addition, San Antonio's Metropolitan Health District (SAMHD) has targeted 78207, due to its ongoing public health problems, for higher demand of social/city services. An additional study by SAMHD identified 167 cases of lead-based paint contamination in children from 2006-2012, which represented the highest amount of recorded cases than in any other zip code in San Antonio (COSA, 2012).

This zip code contains many aging structures. The area has a mix of commercial and residential uses, as well as historic uses of various sizes (COSA, 2012). Eighty-five percent (85%) of the structures were built prior to 1978, when asbestos and lead-based paint were highly used construction materials. Past assessment efforts identified former dry cleaning sites and gas stations demonstrating the continued environmental hazard to the Westside (COSA, 2012). Thus, the documented cases of many older buildings with real or perceived environmental risk create a community at-risk relative to environmental health disparities.

This area now has one of the most impoverished populations in San Antonio. According to a report by the Pew Research Center, San Antonio contained the highest combined percentages of low-income and high-income households living in, respectively, majority low-income and majority high-income census tracts. This lack of wealth distribution has resulted in concentrated areas of poverty. Current median household income for 78207 is **\$22,605, compared to \$50,112** for the city of San Antonio. Current mean household income for 78207 is **\$31,040, compared to \$67,186** for the city of San Antonio (US Census, 2013).

Under 5 years	9.3%
<b>5-19 years</b>	<b>24.4%</b>
20-24 years	8.4%
25-34 years	14.7%
35-44 years	12.7%
45-54 years	11.1%
55-64 years	7.8%
65 years and over	11.5%

Only 47% have a high school diploma, only 2.9 have an Associate's degree, just 2.4% have Bachelor's degrees and 1.6% has a higher degree. Relative to these statistics, it is important to note that **nearly one fourth of the residents in the Westside (24.4%) are ages 5-19** a key demographic that will be targeted by this project. Within the zip code 78207, the current year population is 107,497. The projection for the population in the year 2015 is 109,866, representing a change of 0.44 percent annually from 2010 to 2015. San Antonio's Westside is **approximately 96% Hispanic**. Currently, the population is 50.3% male and 49.7% female. The table at left shows the age breakdown for the target area.

Environmentally, San Antonio's Westside falls within the Westside Creeks area that encompasses Martinez Creek, Alazán Creek, Apache Creek, and San Pedro Creek. All of these creeks are west of the San Antonio River and are tributaries that feed into the San Antonio River. This contributed to the community being at risk for recurring localized flooding with public safety concerns due to loss of emergency access to neighborhoods when roads and bridges are covered in water. In 1954, these creeks were channelized and made wider and deeper to mitigate the risk of flooding. However the area's ecosystem was disrupted and much of the native plant and wildlife were eroded due to this, thus the risk of flooding still remains real. There is a current plan for the Army Corp of Engineers and the San Antonio River Authority to restore the

ecosystem of the Westside Creeks to its original state relative to meadows with native grasses and plant life. Thus, the targeted zip code will benefit from SACA's goal of building the community's capacity for climate resiliency to ensure that the ecosystem restoration is sustained.

An additional environmental issue is recycling. Currently, San Antonio's Solid Waste Management Department has an overall goal that 60% of San Antonio households will consistently recycle by 2025. Presently the current rate is 31% of households that consistently recycle (Personal communication, Nov. 21, 2014). Thus, not only will this project's goal of increasing the community's activities that improve environmental health conditions including recycling benefit the targeted zip code but also will assist San Antonio to reach its recycling goal.

### III. Organization's Historical Connection to the Affected Community

San Anto Cultural Arts (SACA) is a community arts program that has been a part of the Westside for over 20 years. Their mission is **to foster human and community development through community-based arts**. Community arts programs often involve people who are disadvantaged, such as at-risk youth, and are designed in the context of a larger goal (Guetzkow, 2002). SACA strives to cultivate and empower people of all ages; *however since demographics show that youth are in the majority in the Westside and they are at-risk for a multitude of social issues; SACA focuses their mission at-risk youth ages 9-19 years*. Through arts and mentorship, SACA programs afford youth the opportunity to belong to a creative community, build life skills, and obtain technical and marketable job skills that open doors to higher education and employment opportunities, as an alternative solution to the negative influences (truancy, violence, substance abuse, teen pregnancy) that are prevalent in our community. Anecdotal evidence does report that active participation in the arts leads to improved self-concept and control over one's life (Greer, Fleuriet & Cantu, 2012; Lynch & Chosa, 1996; Seham, 1997; Weitz, 1996; Williams, 1995).

SACA **was formed** as a program of Inner City Development in 1993 and received its 501c3 nonprofit status in 1997. SACA's founders were looking for a way to improve the lives of those living in San Antonio's Westside, which is plagued with poverty, unemployment, crime, drugs, and other ills associated with urban blight. SACA was created as a positive way to engage youth, focusing on youth development and cognitive and social skills through the production of community art. SACA's youth participants primarily attend the San Antonio and Edgewood Independent School Districts, in which the student populations are 93.4% and 98.7% economically disadvantaged, respectively. We target at-risk youth ages 9-19 and our participants are approximately 38% male and 62% female. With their knowledge in the arts, the founders developed two core programs: the **Community Mural & Public Art Program** and the **El Placazo Community Newspaper & Mentor Program** that work to empower and educate at-risk youth through community-based arts while instilling social responsibility and building community. To date, SACA's youth and adult participants have produced 48 murals, 3 public sculptures and 200 issues of *El Placazo Community Newspaper*. Through its programming and the integration of new, innovative forms of communication and public art, **SACA empowers over 350 at-risk youth annually**.

The Ontario Arts Council (2002) defines community-based arts as a process that involves professional artists and community members in a collaborative creative process resulting in collective experience and public expression. **To ensure that community residents are involved in decision-making and the development of a community-based art product, SACA holds public meetings.** For instance, before a mural/public art piece is developed, SACA holds community meetings and it is from these meetings that themes are developed. The images portrayed in all of SACA murals are a direct reflection of the local community. *The people that are seen in the mural designs are real people that reside in the community or that are meaningful in some way to the residents of the community.* SACA researches their subjects extensively so that the resulting mural is a valid representation of the chosen theme. Once the mural is ready for installation, *the community is invited to participate*, asking for volunteers to assist with the installation, celebrating the accomplishment through a culturally relevant blessing/dedication ceremony. This creates a venue that draws people together who would otherwise not be engaged in a constructive social activity (Guetzkow, 2002).

**Relative to SACA's past efforts to increase community capacity to address local issues,** attendees at SACA's community meetings are surveyed and then given an open forum to discuss relevant issues. Themes such as *domestic violence, teen pregnancy, crime, and health and wellness* are discussed in detail. These subjects are then addressed in various ways including workshops such as a class on abstinence and sex education; newspaper articles written by domestic violence victims citing resources for those who are going through the ordeal; photography projects focused on the systematic and individual health choices that affect our community; and murals that evoke conversation and thought about issues plaguing the local community, such as gang violence and drug abuse. *SACA sheds light on common issues and engages residents in addressing them in a positive, collective manner that empowers and educates them to make a difference in the bleak statistics that afflict the local community.*

A recent example of this is the summer 2014 collaboration by SACA and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) School of Nursing. Funding was received to conduct an **EcoFilm Camp**. Nursing students taught at-risk youth about climate change using the EPA student curriculum. SACA staff taught the youth the skills of videography and the outcome was the development of three public service announcements that were premiered at a red-carpet event at a community theatre. The PSA's have been uploaded to Vimeo and other social media outlets. <http://www.sananto.org/ecofilm-camp-2014.html>

Over the years, SACA has collaborated with various groups including local arts organizations, health/human services agencies, and schools (K-12 and colleges), which has increased community involvement and **broadened their scope of impact**. Studies report that youth with a low socioeconomic status, such as those in our programs, who engage in regular arts programming are more likely to graduate high school, complete college, obtain gainful employment, volunteer in their community, and vote (Fiske, 1999; Jackson, 1979; Seham, 1997; Weitz, 1996). Many of SACA's alumni have gone onto thriving careers, crediting SACA with giving them the skills; encouragement and support they needed to succeed in school and pursue a college education. SACA has seen the majority of youth that participate completing high school and college, graduating from institutions like University of Texas at San Antonio, University of

Texas at Austin, St. Mary's University, Our Lady of the Lake University, Pratt School of Design, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

#### IV. Project Description

**Overarching Goal:** This project will seek to achieve an increase in the capacity of San Antonio's Westside community for climate resiliency through improved understanding that translates into action to address the harm to health and welfare from exposure of the multiple risks from inappropriate solid waste disposal and methods to eliminate such effects.

##### **Project Objectives and Activities:**

1. Develop collaborations with potential partners for the project, i.e. University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, San Antonio Solid Waste Management Department, San Antonio River Authority, San Antonio Water System, Keep San Antonio Beautiful and Westside Development Corporation. These partnerships will be valuable resources due to their education and training materials and outreach on solid waste disposal. The partnerships will allow SACA to bring in experts during workshops to educate youth about solid waste disposal as well as their expertise in the development of the community-based art projects and activities. **Responsible: SACA Project Director and staff**
2. Recruit 10-15 at-risk Hispanic youth as ambassadors for full participation in the various aspects of the project. SACA has a strong history of engaging youth in their past projects as illustrated by their collaborations with local schools and after-school programs. In 2013, SACA's collaborations enabled them to provide programming at Tafolla Middle School, Kirby Middle School and Metzger Middle School with their curriculum called *Hispanas Unidas*. SACA has also collaborated with charter schools to teach a mural class as part of the sophomore curriculum. A total of 224 unduplicated youth were served in 2013, a 110% increase from the previous years. **Responsible: SACA Project Director and staff**
3. Train interprofessional health professional students in solid waste disposal curriculum, social responsibility and civic engagement. UTHSCSA will engage health professional students that are currently enrolled in a Community Service-Learning class to teach and train the youth ambassadors. **Responsible: UTHSCSA**
4. Health professional students will conduct an interactive workshop to educate recruited youth in the health and welfare effects of exposures to the materials in solid waste and strategies for prevention. Workshop modules will include such topics as: 1) definition of solid waste; 2) myriad of solid waste generated by San Antonio; 3) various appropriate solid waste disposal mechanisms in San Antonio; 4) health and environmental impacts from inappropriate solid waste disposal; 5) importance of recycling, 6) backyard composting of food wastes, 7) disposing of pharmaceutical wastes appropriately, and 8) how to message, conversational and through social media, to peers and community members about solid waste disposal. Included also will be modules lead by health professional students and SACA staff regarding social responsibility, civic engagement and leadership cultivation and skills needed for community engagement. During the workshop, collaborators like the San Antonio River Authority and San Antonio Solid Waste Department will provide interactive hands on education about their efforts to

- ### Timeline:

[illegible]

### **Evaluation Process for Determining Success**

With this project, SACA is seeking to use arts in a very innovative ways to improve and strengthen an improvised and underrepresented community's involvement in climate resiliency. To evaluate the success of this project, SACA is aware two levels need to be considered: individual participation in the arts by the youth and community-level impact.

Relative to individual level, each youth ambassador will be given a pre and posttest to gauge their improvement in knowledge about solid waste disposal. In addition, as there is research that states that participation in art projects improve sense of control and self-concept (Greer, Fleuriet, & Cantu, 2012; Fiske, 1999, Randall, Magie & Miller, 1997) each youth ambassador will be given a pre and post survey. Lastly, as youth ambassadors will have an experience to learn technical and interpersonal skills important for civic engagement, we will to a pre and post survey on their level of social capital.

Relative to community-level impact of the project, SACA will measure success by tracking community participation and activity in several ways: a) the number of youth that the youth ambassadors engage to participate in the various project activities; b) youth ambassadors will write at least four stories relative to solid waste disposal in the *El Placazo* Community Newspaper as well as at least two op-eds in the *San Antonio Express-News*, San Antonio's local newspaper; c) a public mural will be completed and located in the Westside that depicts a culturally-relevant message about environmental health and solid waste disposal; d) the youth ambassadors and other youth that they engage will do pre and post project block walking with a survey that measures residents' awareness of solid waste disposal resources in the city; e) inquiries will be sent to residents that attended community meetings as a form of member checking to determine if the community arts activities interpreted their messages accurately; f) the San Antonio Solid Waste Disposal Department will record an increase in households in the zip code that recycle; and g) random checks by youth ambassadors at local grocery stores during the year of the project will show an increase in shoppers using recyclable grocery bags.

## **V. Organizational Capacity and Programmatic Capability**

Over the last two years, the SACA has experienced significant growth in programming, staff, and community and donor support. Between 2012 and 2013, the number of youth served by the SACA nearly tripled and saw a 16% increase in 2014. 2015 expects to have an even more significant increase in capacity and programmatic capability due to the recent completion of a 1700 square foot programming space addition, tripling the size of our facility. Additionally, SACA has implemented remote programming, which essentially takes SACA instructors directly into the schools to collaborate with teachers by integrating arts programming into everyday lesson plans. As an example, currently, SACA is working with one middle school, whose student body is 90% Hispanic and who reside in the impoverished Westside. Through a math intervention mural project, SACA utilized art as an intervention tool for tapping into students' creativity and self-expression as a means of increasing math outcomes for students who are traditionally marginalized and underserved.

SACA's capacity and programmatic capability lies largely in the strengths of the staff. Mari Hernandez, *El Placazo Community Newspaper & Mentor Program Manager*, has been involved with the SACA as a mentor, volunteer, and instructor for over 10 years. She is an accomplished photographer and writer and credits SACA with providing her the opportunity to explore and refine her professional skills. Mari received her BA in English from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2008 and went on to receive certification in Technology of Participation from the Community Leadership Institute in 2011. She was also invited to participate in the 2014 National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures Summer Leadership Institute. In her role, she oversees the newspaper and mentor program working directly with youth, adults and elders.

Cecilia Santos, Community Mural & Public Art Program Manager, holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Our Lady of the Lake University. As the program manager, she works directly with youth and community residents to facilitate high-level programming aimed at fostering human and community development. She is an accomplished artist and muralist.

Samantha Rae Lopez, Outreach and Communications Manager, has significant experience working in the nonprofit sector with her most recent position being the Program Coordinator for Latinitas in Austin, TX. Prior to that role, she worked at the Assistant to the Executive Director, Office Manager and the Production Manager for the Austin Film Festival. Samantha earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Film Production in 2008 from Full Sail University. She has also produced and/or managed the production of seven films since 2011. With her experience working with underserved communities and her skills in film and technology, Samantha plays a key role in maintaining a high level of artistic and programmatic standards for our programs.

## **VI. Qualifications of the Project Manager**

Harvey Mireles, Executive Director, has been involved with SACA for over 17 years as a donor, volunteer, and served as Treasurer on the Board of Directors. Mireles served twenty years in the United States Air Force in numerous capacities including working under senior military leadership and being on the immediate staff of General Colin Powell. After retiring from the Air Force fifteen years ago, he began his career in nonprofit when he became the Director of Technology for Life Works, the largest social service agency in Austin, Texas. He served as the Director of Information Technology at Haven for Hope where he was responsible for building the technological infrastructure for the organization. He played an integral role in the construction of both the 23-acre campus and programs of the renowned homeless transformation campus in downtown San Antonio which houses over 900 homeless individuals, 200 staff members and 35 partner agencies. This led to his position of Associate Director with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a nonprofit dedicated to serving the poor throughout South Central Texas, where he oversaw the operations for the organization including its social service programs, distribution center, and homeless dining facility which provided over 40,000 meals per month to the chronic homeless. As the Executive Director of SACA, Harvey is responsible for program and organizational oversight as well as fiscal accountability. He is responsible for the management of a \$400,000 plus annual budget with reporting requirements to Federal, County, State, City, Foundation and private funders. Harvey has over 30 years of leadership and



management experience and is credited with the tremendous physical and community growth of SACA.

## **VII. Past Performance in Reporting on Outputs and Outcomes**

Project Title: Youth Program Services Providing Healthy Alternatives to Risky Behavior

Funding Agency: City of San Antonio Department of Human Services

Grant #: 4600014225

Award Amount: \$33,535

Project Title: Cultural Arts Operational Support

Funding Agency: City of San Antonio Department for Culture and Creative Development

Grant #: 4600008875

Award Amount: \$102,600

Project Title: Math Intervention Mural Project

Grant: High School Completion Grant

Funding Agency: San Antonio Area Foundation

Grant #: N/A

Award Amount: \$20,000

Project Title: Anaglyph 3D Mural

Grant: Challenge America Fast-Track

Funding Agency: National Endowment for the Arts

Grant #: 14-7800-7116

Award Amount: \$10,000

Project Title: San Anto Cultural Arts Printmaking Program

Funding Agency: Bexar County Department of Community Resources

Grant #: N/A

Award Amount: \$15,000

Project Title: Public Art in Downtown San Antonio

Funding Agency: Bexar County Department of Community Resources

Grant #: N/A

Award Amount: \$15,000

To ensure consistent and updated program participant and attendance data, all participants are required to fill out a Participant Form as well as sign in each time he or she attends a program session. This information is then maintained in a web based, in-house solution used for tracking and measuring progress toward expected goals and outcomes. This Participant Data Management System (PDMS) is a database utilized and updated by staff on a regular basis and allows for quick reporting of participant data such as gender, grade level and program attendance. This is an ever-growing database of participant information used to assess

participant demographics in addition to the measurement of goals and outcomes. SACA utilizes PDMS for information needed in reporting and applying for grants.